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Class

help restore to the authorities a fugitive slave, unlawfully taken from the custody of officers on Feb. 15th inst.

Apr. 25. Warning the public against violation of our laws and national obligations, on the occasion of an armed invasion into Cuba by foreigners and others from the United States (the Lopez expedition).

Oct. 22. Warning the public against participation in a military expedition into Mexico, a country at peace with the United States.

1853.

Feb. 25. Convening an extraordinary session of the Senate.

26. To make public a commercial convention between the United States and the Netherlands.

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

1852.

May 17. To the Secretary of War, announcing that the President has authorized Hugh Maxwell, collector at New York, to arrest any unlawful expedition that may attempt to fit out in his district, and calling for issuance of proper instructions to military officers.

June 29. To the heads of the several Departments, announcing the death of Henry Clay, and suggesting that the Departments be closed for the day.

Sept. 13. To Gen. Joseph G. Totten, regarding water supply for Washington and Georgetown.

Oct. 25. To the acting Secretary of State, and heads of other Departments, announcing the death of Daniel Webster, Secretary of State, eulogizing him and suggesting suitable action.

MR. FILLMORE'S VIEWS

RELATING TO SLAVERY

THE SUPPRESSED PORTION OF THE THIRD
ANNUAL MESSAGE TO CONGRESS
DECEMBER 6, 1852

UNIVERSITY
OF
CALIFORNIA

MR. FILLMORE'S

VIEWS RELATING TO SLAVERY

The suppressed portion of President Fillmore's annual message to Congress, on the 6th of December, 1852, relating to slavery, is as follows[1]:

This is the last time that I ever expect to address my fellow-citizens generally, from any official position. There is one subject vitally affecting the perpetuity of our institutions, and the prosperity of our common country, upon which, in taking my final leave of public life, I feel it my duty briefly to express my sentiments. I know that the subject is a delicate one. I know that the difference of sentiment—not to say conflict of opinion—which pervades the Republic, forbids me to hope for anything like a unanimous concurrence in my views; and prudence might therefore admonish me not to express them. But I feel that I owe it to myself —that I owe it to the country which gave me birth, and which has honored me with its highest trusts—frankly and fearlessly to take my share of the responsibility which naturally attaches to my position by placing on record, now and forever, my views on the subject of slavery.

1. Here reprinted from a pamphlet without title-page, or any indication of place or date except "Thomas, typographer," on the cover, which fixes it as a Buffalo imprint. The cover-title is as follows: "The suppressed portion of President Fillmore's Annual Message to Congress, on the 6th December, 1852, relating to slavery." Although suppressed, it evidently was not entirely withheld from the public. Newspaper allusions to it are to be found, though the present editor has not seen it elsewhere in print in its entirety, nor do the authors of histories embracing the time of Mr. Fillmore's Presidency appear to have knowledge of it.

In doing so, however, I shall feel compelled, from the brief space which can be devoted to any one subject, to confine myself to its *political* aspect, leaving the moral and religious views of this great question to the casuist and the divine. And even as a political question, affecting the social organization, my views must necessarily be limited to the inquiry, whether its existence among us is a blessing or an evil, and, if an evil, whether there are any means by which the country may hope to be relieved from it. Were the question now for the first time presented, whether slavery should be introduced into the Republic, there would, beyond all doubt, be an overwhelming majority against it. But it is here. It was planted by the mother country; maintained by her laws, and protected by her arms. It had a feeble growth in the Northern colonies, and was easily eradicated after the Revolution; but its roots struck deep in Southern soil, and its luxuriant strength defied the storm of freedom which swept over the land in 1776. It is now manifest that, if it shall be prostrated by any external force, it will bury beneath its sturdy trunk and falling branches the millions who have taken shelter beneath its spreading shade. Let us, then, look at it as it is—see what has been its operation upon our social organization heretofore, and thence infer what are to be its effects hereafter.

In 1620 the first slaves were brought to the country which now constitutes the United States. From what we know of the degradation and suffering of the native races of Africa, it is hardly to be doubted that their condition was greatly improved by the transfer. Here was the commencement of African slavery in this country. For more than two hundred and thirty years it has formed a part of our social system. It has "grown with our growth and strengthened with our strength," and it has left among us as its fruits, according to the computation of the census of 1850, 3,203,867 slaves, and 428,051 free people of color—being a fraction more than seven slaves to one free person of color throughout the whole Union. Our entire population, free and slave, was by the same census 20,191,088, being a fraction more

than six free persons, including black and white, to every slave. These are the elements which now constitute our nation; and in looking into futurity to see what such elements are likely to produce, the nation must be regarded in its corporate capacity and be considered immortal. It may change its form of government, as it has done before; but this alone will not materially change its constituent elements. It may enlarge its dominion by the addition of slave territory, but such an addition is likely to bring with it more slaves in proportion to the free population than now exist in the slaveholding States, and would consequently afford no relief for this class of our population. The slave population may be scattered over a broader surface, perhaps, or it may occupy other districts than those which now confine it; but by a law of its condition, of which the operation is now apparent, it manifestly must continue to retire from its old habitations as it extends toward new settlements. Whatever changes may take place, slave territory is more likely to become free by the extinction of slavery where it now exists, than to increase by the establishment of it where it does not.

Assuming, then, that slavery hereafter is to be restricted to a territory not greater than that which it now occupies, and that both the free and slave population will increase as fast for the next fifty years as they have done for the past fifty, the whole population of the slave States in 1900, less than fifty years hence, will amount to 35,636,045; and at the end of the next succeeding half century, 1950, it will amount to 131,425,376. Causes not now in operation, or the effect of which cannot now be calculated, may change this anticipated result; but if it should be realized, then it is necessary to observe that the whole area of the slave States, exclusive of Texas, is estimated at 617,131 square miles, and that of Texas at 237,321 square miles, making an aggregate of slave territory of 854,452 square miles. If the population of only fifty years hence should be settled upon this aggregate territory, it would average a fraction less than forty-two to each square mile; and in 1956 it would amount

to a fraction less than 154 to each square mile; whereas the whole population of Virginia, black and white, averages but a fraction more than twenty-three to each square mile; and that of Great Britain, including all its large cities and immense manufacturing establishments, averages only two hundred and thirty-four to the square mile. By the contemplation of such a result, it becomes necessary to inquire what is to become of the population in the slave States, for it is clear that the two races cannot long continue to subsist together. One hundred years will not elapse before a contest must commence between them for the means of subsistence, which will assuredly end in the destruction of the weaker party. It is only necessary to look at the pauperism of Great Britain to read our future history. With resources beyond those of any other nation, she sends forth annually hundreds of thousands of emigrants to seek food and raiment in distant climes.

But this view of the case presupposes a continued state of peace, or at least as much of that blessing in proportion as we have enjoyed for the last fifty years. But a civil war, or a servile insurrection, or even a foreign war, may suddenly change the whole aspect, and hasten a crisis which time alone would seem to render inevitable. What effect such wars might have upon the institution of slavery no human sagacity can foresee.

But there is another consideration connected with this subject which no friend of this Union can look upon without anxiety and dread. I allude to the hostility to slavery which is manifested by some portion of the population of the free States, and its threatened aggressions upon the slave States, and the apprehension and consequent efforts on their part to defend themselves against it. The number in the free States who could be induced to disregard the guarantees of the Constitution, and attempt the abolition of slavery in other States, is comparatively small. Yet it is not to be disguised that their constant agitation has increased the prejudice of the North against that institution, and alarmed the South for its safety. This constitutes a disturbing ele-

ment in the harmonious action of this Government, which naturally increases our anxiety for the future. I speak not of the merits or demerits of the sentiment in which this agitation originates, but look only to its effects upon the body politic; and, for all the purposes of this argument, it may be conceded that the great majority who entertain this sentiment are entirely sincere and honest in their convictions; but this sincerity, so far from lessening, actually increases the danger.

But, independent of this, the natural rivalry between the slave-holding and free States is unavoidable. It commenced with the formation of the Constitution. At that time it was chiefly a question of power. The Representatives in Congress were to be apportioned among the States according to their population, and the electors of President and Vice-President in each were to be equal in number to its Senators and Representatives. The slave-holding States, for the purpose of increasing their representation in Congress and their electors of President and Vice-President, insisted that their slaves were persons, and should be counted as such in apportioning the Representatives among the States; but the free States insisted that they were property, liable to taxation, but not entitled to representation in Congress. The difference was finally compromised, by providing in the Constitution that five slaves should be equal to three free persons, and then that the "Representatives and direct taxes should be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers." Thus was this question settled, giving according to the last apportionment, twenty Representatives in Congress, and the same number of Presidential electors to the slave States, based upon their slave population. If the principle contended for by the free States at that time had been adopted, the slave-holding States would have been denied the whole representation now derived from the enumeration of their slaves. If the principle *now* announced by many in the free States, that slaves are to be regarded as *persons*, had been adopted, the slave-holding States would at the present time be entitled to a representation of thirty-

one instead of twenty members, based upon their slave population. Notwithstanding the mode of apportionment finally determined upon, the free States have always had a majority of Representatives in Congress, and a corresponding number of Presidential electors; and for sixty years past, until the admission of California, the number of free and slave States has been kept equal by admitting alternately into the Union a free and a slave State, and as each State was represented by two Senators only, the consequence has been that the Senate has been equally divided between the free and slave-holding States.

The contest for supremacy between the North and the South growing out of this question, which was temporarily settled by the adoption of the Constitution, was renewed on the admission of Missouri as a State, and was again compromised by admitting her as a slave State, and excluding slavery from certain other parts of our territory. Again the agitation of it was permitted to slumber for some fifteen years, when, without any apparent contest for political power which had marked its previous recurrence, it displayed itself at the North by a few fanatics in the open declaration of war against slavery, however guaranteed, accompanied with demonstrations of a purpose to abolish it in the States and Territories where it existed. The South took the alarm, and sought to strengthen itself by the acquisition of additional slave territory. After a long and fearful struggle it succeeded, by annexing Texas; but even this apparent success brought with it a war that resulted in the acquisition of new territory which will doubtless add more than enough free States to the Union to counterbalance all the slave States that will ever be formed from Texas. These last acquisitions stirred up a sectional controversy between the North and the South that shook this Republic to its centre. But again the controversy has been fortunately compromised, by admitting California as a free State and giving to the South the full benefit of that constitutional provision for the rendition of fugitive slaves, and by agreeing to admit into the Union any other new States formed from the re-

cently acquired territory, with or without slavery, as the people of each State shall determine on its application for admission.

We perceive, therefore, that this element in our polity has been a constant source of irritation and controversy; that every acquisition of new territory, if not stimulated by a desire to increase the power of one section of the Union as against the other, is viewed with increasing jealousy by one side or the other. It is manifest from all our past history that this agitation is to be renewed with increased violence as often as any new State shall apply for admission whose Constitution tolerates slavery.

When the several colonies declared themselves free and independent States, and each adopted its own Constitution, it is clear that it had the sole control over the question of slavery within its limits. The Union of the States was formed by the establishment of a General Government, to which certain powers were given; but the Federal Constitution expressly declared that "the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, were reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." This power over the institution of slavery in the several States not having been conferred by the Constitution upon the United States, nor prohibited to the States, was consequently reserved to them, and they alone can provide for its abolition whenever they may deem it expedient and proper. Congress has no power over the subject of abolition. Yet it is not to be disguised that the avowed abolitionists in the free States, regardless of the sacred obligations of the Constitution, are prepared to do everything in their power to abolish slavery in the several States where it exists. Yet so signally have they failed to produce any result favorable to their declared object, that all their efforts, thus far, have only tended to rivet the chains of slavery, and to deprive the bondman of many indulgences which, before the era of this mischievous effort, had been cheerfully accorded to him by his master.

The misdirected and pernicious zeal of this unfortunate sect has tempted the slave to abuse his privileges, and compelled his master, for his own security, to abridge them. To convince us of this, it is only necessary to recur to the fact that prior to the commencement of this political agitation in 1835 for the abolition of slavery, the laws of most of the States opposed no obstacle to the instruction of slaves in reading and writing, nor forbade their manumission at pleasure. But now, to prevent servile insurrections, the danger of which is greatly enhanced by such a degree of education as might render the slave population accessible to the incendiary publications of abolitionists, the instruction of the slave in reading and writing is, in several of the States, laid under a severe interdict. And as a free black population has been found to contribute to the same apprehension of disturbance, the power of manumission has been circumscribed by conditions which greatly restrict its exercise. The several returns of the census which have been made during the last half century, accordingly show that the free blacks within the last ten years have increased at a rate less than eleven per cent., while for the ten years from 1820 to 1830 they increased at the rate of more than thirty-six per cent.; and for the ten years from 1830 to 1840—during which time this abolition movement had but partially produced its baneful effects—it may also be seen that the increase was a fraction over twenty per cent.; yet, during all this time from 1800 to 1850, slavery went on with an almost uniform increase, averaging more than twenty-nine per cent. for every ten years. This is a most truthful but sad exhibition, as shown by figures and facts, of the injurious effects of political abolition upon the slave himself, independently of all the injury which it has done the country in stirring up strife between brethren of the same great family, and endangering the perpetuity of the Union itself.

These facts warrant the conclusion that slavery must, in less than half the time that has elapsed since its introduction into this country, overwhelm the slave States with its numbers, unless something be done to check its increase;

and that it will give birth to a conflict of races with all the lamentable consequences which must characterize such a strife. This terrible event may be precipitated, as it was in St. Domingo, by the well-meant but indiscreet and fatal policy of foreign interference to abolish slavery. It must be apparent that the nation is fast approaching that horrid gulf the danger of which is not to be lessened—but, on the contrary, rendered more destructive—by refusing to give it a timely and dispassionate consideration. The terrific scenes of St. Domingo are sooner or later to be reënacted here, unless something be done to avert it. When that war commences it will doubtless end, not as in St. Domingo, in the total destruction of the white, but in the utter extermination of the black race. I need not say that, before this is accomplished, the nation must wade through seas of blood, and the helpless and the innocent fall victims to the most cruel of wars—a civil war—a war of races, embittered with the ferocity and malignity peculiar to a servile war. These are the impending dangers of slavery which invoke the gravest deliberation of the nation, and invite the wise and the good of every section to inquire and resolve what is best to be done to provide against evils not the less deserving of our attention because they are yet remote.

I am satisfied that all unsolicited interference with slavery from other States or other countries will but aggravate the evil. It is a law of human nature, as universal as the instincts and pride of man, that no family, municipality, State, or nation, ever did or ever will tolerate the unasked intervention of a foreign power in reference to its own domestic policy. To attempt it, is ever regarded as an indignity and an insult, and the officious intermeddler is invariably repelled with resentment. Whatever, therefore, is done to rid the country of this evil must be done chiefly by the slave States themselves. They must first appreciate the danger, indicate the remedy, and lead the way: and then the free States and the General Government can aid them. But all efforts from the free States to force abolition upon the slave States, or to dictate the mode by which, or the

time when, it is to be accomplished, are worse than useless, as they tend to endanger everything that secures "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" to the white man, or that can possibly benefit the slave himself.

There is another question connected with this which deserves consideration, and that is, the condition and prospects of the free people of color. It is not to be disguised that their condition and their prospects are alike deplorable. As they become dangerous in the slave States they will be expelled by rigorous enactments; for self-preservation knows no law but necessity. Will the free States consent to be burdened with such a population that must necessarily fill their poor-houses and penitentiaries with the unfortunate, the helpless, and the vicious? It cannot be expected; and one State has already excluded them by a constitutional provision. But even if they were admitted, they must soon come into competition for subsistence with the white man, in a climate more congenial to the latter, and they cannot succeed. The very fact that their increase, including those manumitted, and fugitives, for the last ten years, has been less than eleven per cent., while that of the slave population which has no addition by immigration or otherwise except the natural increase, has been more than twenty-eight per cent., would seem to be conclusive proof that the free black in this country is not, upon the whole, as well off as the slave. Manumission, therefore, without colonization, cannot benefit the black, while it would create a worthless population that would ruin the South, and could hardly be endured at the North.

Thus having stated the evil, I am bound to offer my views of the remedy. This I do with unfeigned diffidence, and with a most sincere declaration that I will cheerfully concur in any other constitutional mode of relief which Congress may see fit to adopt. But after the most anxious and mature consideration of this perplexing question in all its bearings, I confess that I see no remedy but by colonizing the free blacks, either in Africa or the West Indies, or both. This, it appears to me, is all that Congress can do. It can-

not abolish slavery, it can only invite emancipation by removing the free black from his dangerous proximity to the slave. But this would, beyond all question, offer a strong inducement to manumission, and would enable many to emancipate their slaves who are desirous of doing so, but are restrained by the laws of their States, which forbid emancipation unless the slave be removed beyond its boundaries. Such persons would thus be enabled to gratify their benevolent wishes, at the same time that it would be left entirely to the slave-holding States themselves to determine when manumission should be permitted, or slavery abolished.

This is where the Constitution has left this perplexing subject, and I am convinced that it is where the peace of the country requires that it should remain. But the bare removal of the free blacks would be a blessing to them, and would relieve the slave and free States from a wretched population, that must ever be kept in a state of degradation by the prejudice of color and race, whether they reside in the slave or free States. There can be no well-grounded hope for the improvement of either their moral or social condition, until they are removed from a humiliating sense of inferiority in the presence of a superior race, and are enabled to feel the wholesome stimulus of a social equality.

Assuming, then, that colonization is the true remedy, is it practicable? It appears by the census of 1850 that there were 428,051 free persons of color in the United States; and the annual increase of the slave population for the last ten years has averaged 71,673. It is therefore manifest, that if emigration could take place at the rate of 100,000 per annum, that would soon remove the present free colored population, and not only prevent the increase of the slave population, but constantly diminish it, and at last either wipe it out entirely, or reduce it to such an inconsiderable number that there would be no danger or inconvenience in its emancipation, when its place should be supplied by free labor, as it doubtless would be eventually by emigration from Asia, which has already commenced in California. But to accomplish this, it must be a national work; and I

know of no more useful purpose to which a portion of the public revenues could be devoted than this.

According to the price now paid by the Colonization Society for transporting emigrants to Liberia, $3,000,000 will remove 100,000, and $2,000,000 will subsist them for six months after their arrival at Liberia; and of course the expense would be much less for those which should emigrate to the West Indies. And should gold be discovered in the mountains of Africa, as it has been in California and Australia, of which there is every indication from the amount gathered in the streams, it would greatly facilitate the process of colonization.

It is true that this must be the work of many years, not to say centuries, for it can only progress as the slave-holding States, who are chiefly interested, shall find it for their advantage to encourage emancipation. It cannot be expected that a social evil like this, which has been accumulating for more than two hundred years, and is now intertwined with all the industrial pursuits of one-half of the States of the Union, can be eradicated in a day. Its increase has been insensible, and its decrease should be so gradual as to create no shock. But it cannot be commenced too soon for the good of the country; for the rational philanthropist will see in its gradual accomplishment the only sure mode of relieving the country from this increasing evil without violence and bloodshed, and instead of joining in the fanaticism of abolition, he will patiently await its fulfillment; and the devout Christian, who has longed for the conversion of Africa, and mourned over its heathen idolatry and degradation, will see in these Christian slaves, emancipated and returned to their own country, the true missionaries to Africa, and recognize in this whole transaction the mysterious wisdom of an All-wise Being, who by these means will bring benighted Africa to a knowledge of the Gospel.

MR. FILLMORE'S

OFFICIAL LETTERS

AS VICE-PRESIDENT AND PRESIDENT
TO HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS,
YEARS 1849 TO 1853

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